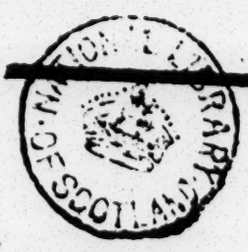
THE PETITION OF THE PROTESTANTS IN FRANCE TO THEIR KING

Upon Account of the

TREATY OF PEACE



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We cannot adore the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and it cannot be deny'd but that we ſhould be Idolators if we ſhould adore it, conſidering the Opinions which we hold; ſo that no body can conſtrain us to do it, without forcing us to commit the greateſt of Crimes. We implore Your Majeſty to think of it. Pardon us, Sir, if we ſpeak freely to Your Majeſty upon the Subject of our Tears and Groans. We are not, Sir, whatever Name they they give us; we are not thoſe ancient Hereticks againſt whom the Church has juſtly fulminated, becauſe they had nothing but the Name of Chriſtian, which they diſhonour'd as well by the Monſtrouſneſs of their Doctrine, as the Impurity of their Morals, If we refuſe to believe the Doctrine of Purgatory and Indulgences, the Invocation of Saints, the worſhip of Images, the Veneration of Relicks; and thoſe other petty Devotions, invented by the Monks in the Later Ages, 'tis becauſe thoſe points are not to be found in the Holy Scripture, and we believe we cannot admit 'em with a ſafe Conſcience upon the warrant of Humane Authority.

We ſpeak Sir of Humane Authority; for we are convinc'd, that if God had been pleas'd to erect a viſible Tribunal upon Earth, to which we ſhould ſubmit our Conſciences in Matters of Religion, this infalible Tribunal would without all contradiction, have been ſo characteriz'd, that it would have been an eaſie thing to have known it. It highly concern'd the Safety and Repoſe of the Conſciences of the Faithful. Now Your Majeſty well knows, that even in your own Communion, this Tribunal is a thing conteſted between the Pope and the Councils. All the Doctors of Your Kingdom decide it in favour of the Councils. All the Doctors of Italy and many others hold for the Pope. The Difficulties alledg'd on Both ſides are ſo conſiderable that not being able with that Certainty which the Faith requires, to find out this infallible Tribunal, we believe it the ſafeſt way to follow the Word of God only, for the Rule of Faith. And to us it ſeems that our Conduct has nothing in it of that Obſtinacy which makes People Herricks according to the Cannons of the Church.

We pray to God, Sir, for the long Continuance and Proſperity of Your Majeſty's Reign; but after all, Your Majeſty is not Immortal. It may be, Sir, that upon the Bed of Death, perhaps Your Majeſty then may come to be touch'd with ſome Apprehenſions of of Fear and Compunction, for having conſtrain'd the Conſciences of Your Subjects who ſtill give Your Majeſty an Account of their Faith with all Obedience and Reſpect, whenever you requir'd it from them. For the ſake of the Almighty, Sir, we implore Your

Majeſty

Majesty to consider, that perhaps at the last Moments of Your Life, the dreadful Calamities of so great a Number of Your Subjects, into which the Malice of People, counterfeiting Devotion, have engag'd Your Majesty to precipitate them, may come to present themselves before Your Eyes, and trouble the Repose of Your Soul. For in a word, Sir; permit us to speak it once more, what have we done to merit the drawing of Your Indignation upon us? Tho' our Religion were false; Your Majesty by sending Your Teachers among us to instruct us, has done all that God requires from a Christian Prince, without any Obligation that Piety laid upon You, to revoke Your Word and your Edicts. The same God who Ordains us to labour the Salvation of our Neighbours; forbids us to force the Conscience and constrain men to turn Hypocrites whether they will or no We can hardly believe that the Violences which have been offer'd us e'er came to the knowledge of your Majesty, or that You would endure that the History of Your Glorious Reign shall be clouded with the Relations of them, and that ever it should be said, that You persecuted Your most faithful Subjects, because they desir'd to worship God according to his Word, and the motions of their Consciences, without any other Defect in their Duty. For these several Years that we have suffer'd, we have carefully examin'd our Religion. We can also say, tho' it should prove to our Shame, that we have examin'd it with a secret Desire to meet with Errors in it, that we might be free to follow Your Majesty's Order: But this Examination has serv'd to no other purpose then to corroberate us in the Faith we have profess'd from our Infancy.

We keep our selves in silence, so long as your Majesty was engag'd in this toilsome War. Now that you are labouring the Peace of Europe, vouchsafe us, Sir. what we demand with all the Respect we owe Your Majesty, the Peace of our Consciences. Some implore your Majesty. to restore 'em their Wives and their Children; others demand their Fathers and their Husbands, Some pray Your Majesty, that they may be deliver'd from Cloysters, Prisons, and Barbarous Climates, where they are confin'd among Savages; others to be releas'd from Chains and Oars, where they sit bound among the worst of Caitiffs. Let us not be the only Persons in distress, to whom your Throne and Goodness are inaccessible. We beg of your Majesty, to live peaceably, as humble Subjects, and faithful to your Majesty, with Liberty to Worship God according to our Consciences. Suffer, Sir, Oh, suffer a great Number of Your Subjects, whom their Religion has constrain'd to depart Your

King-

A PETITION *presented to the King of* France. *By the Protestants in his Kingdom, who have been formerly constrain'd to embrace the* Roman *Religion.*

To the KING.

SIR.

YOur Subjects, who profess a Religion which the Edicts cal the *Pretended Reformed*, and of which you have forbid 'em the publick Exercise for some Years, come to throw themselves at Your Majesty's Feet, to make known to Your Majesty their humble Remonstrances, and to implore Your Compassion upon their Miseries, which are so dreadful, that your Majesty cannot cast Your Eyes upon their deplorable Condition, without some Pity upon their Sufferings. Your *Majesty*, Sir, has always made it Your chief Glory to stop the Progress of Your Arms, and to suspend the Course of Your Victories, in order to give Peace to *Europe*. Must Your own Subjects, who never violated the Fidelity which they owe You, and which the Religion that they profess enjoyns 'em to pay You, be the only Persons that are to be depriv'd of Your Royal Bounty ? What have they done, and of what deformed Colours have their Enemys made use of, to black'n 'em in Your Majesty's Eyes ?

They are perswaded, that next to their Duty to God, they are oblig'd to pay Your Majesty an unlimited Obedience. They know no person upon Earth who can absolve 'em from that Fidelity which is Your due. To Fear God and Honour Your *Majesty*, to spend their Estates and Lives in Your Service, this among them is an inviolable Maxim which they take care to inculcat into their Children. No Troubles of the preceeding Reigns can be imputed to them without the higheſt Injustice Your Majesty is too clear-sighted, and Your Council too penetrating, not to be well satify'd that those Commotions were caus'd either by Princes, lawful Heirs to the Crown which they transmitted to Your *Majesty*, in defending it against those who attempted to usurp it, or by some Grandees of the Kingdom, who never want Pretences, especially when they have conceiv'd an Opinion, that a Chief *Minister* abuses the Authority of his *Prince*. In a word, since Your Majesty ascended the Throne, and took the Reins of Government into Your own Hands, Your Supplicants never departed from their Duty. They can also boast the Approbation wherewith your Majesty has honour'd their Fidelity, which has always been firm and constant, tho' they were powerfully

ſo llicited in the time of Your Majeſty's Minority, whoſe undoubted Right they have always held Inviolable and Sacred.

We make no queſtion, Sir, but that we have been painted forth to Your Majeſty, too much taken up with publick Affairs, throughly to underſtand our Religion, as a ſort of People whom a pure Spirit of Limbertiniſm held engag'd in our Profeſſion, and who would quit it without any Trouble or Remorſe, ſoſoon as they ſhould behold it beſet with Thorns, and environ'd with dreadful Calamities and Torments, by the multitude of Edicts and Declarations which they wreſted in a manner out of Your Majeſty's Hands. But we implor Your Majeſty, Sir, by that Royal Goodneſs which cauſes the Repoſe of Your Subjects, to reflect at preſent upon the Counſels which have been given Your Majeſty, and upon this pretended Libertiniſm, with which they have disfigured us in Your Majeſty's ſight. They can never ſay, that a Spirit of Libertiniſm could oblidge ſo many Thouſand perſons to quit their Countrey, a Country full of all manuer of Bleſſings, to beg their Bread among Foreigners, to expoſe themſelves to the danger of being confin'd to Priſons, Cloiſters, or ſent to the Galleys, as ſome have been of all Conditions and Characters. Of neceſſity, Sir, the Power of Conſcience muſt be very great that can prevail with Men to undergo ſuch Extremities.

'Tis true, that if a Conſcience ignorant and prejudic'd by falſe principles ſhould engage in Crimes that troubl'd the Repoſe of Society, Your Majeſty had reaſon to ſuppreſs the Licenciouſneſs of a Turbulent and Criminal Conſcience. But, Sir, we are convinc'd that our greater Enimies can lay no ſuch thing to our Charge Our Morals are pure, and without Reproach, in reſpect of God in reſpect of Your Majeſty, and in reſpect of Society. As for our Doctrine, of what Error can they convict it? We admit the Symbols of Faith compos'd by the firſt Oecumenic Councils, & the Symbol or Creed which is call'd the Apoſtles. We believe in one God Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. We believe our ſelves redeem'd by the Sacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt our God and Redeemer, provided we partake of the Merits of his Death and Sufferings, by a lively Faith, operating in good Works, and by a ſincere Repentance. We admit in the Holy Euchariſt, a Spiritual Eating of the Fleſh of Jeſus Chriſt, We Baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins. We invoke the Almighty in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, and by his Interceſſion, as he commanded us. This, Sir, is the ſubſtance of our Religion. Your Doctors agree upon all theſe Articles, and admit 'em as we do.

We

Kingdom;, to return again, that they may end their Days under Your Royal Authority, and call upon God one among another as we were accuſtom'd to do.

Receive, Great Sir, with your wonted Goodneſs, this Petition, which would have been ſubſcrib'd by ſeveral Thouſands of Perſons, if your Majeſty would have given us Permiſsion. Give Ear to our juſt Demands. We addreſs our ſelves to Your Majeſty, We Supplicate Your Majeſty to caſt your Eyes upon our Miſeries, and upon the Tears which we privatly ſhed in our Families. Our Fidelity is known to Your Majeſty; return us, Great Sir, your Protection, and the Effects of Your Goodneſs, and your juſtice, which have been taken from us by Surprize, and upon falſe Accuſations, which have aggravated Your Majeſty's Prejudice againſt us. We ſhall pray to God, as ſtill we do, for the Proſperity of your Reign, and of your Sacred Perſon, and we ſhall leave to our Children the ſame juſt Sentiments of Obedience and Fidelity.